

An informal guide to not freaking out about it

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What this guide is and why it exists

This document was created to be used freely by anyone who stumbles across it. You can print it out and give it to your friends, you can assign it as a reading in your class, you can share it with a sibling or forward it to anyone considering an English Lit degree to suggest that they might want to reconsider. You can do anything you want with this document, but you CAN NOT SELL IT IN PART OR IN FULL. This is a free document for everyone to use, it is not for anyone to sell.

This is not a professionally written document, it is not a particularly well-planned document, but it is an exhaustive document that follows the step-by-step process that I use to write research papers, which is a process that I learned when completing my BA in English Lit. I have returned to school for more schooling (academia is a curse and I have offended a witch, clearly) and in doing so I realized that none of the instruction I had received at a lower-than-400 level of education had gotten into the nitty gritty of how to find, read, synthesize, and organize research for a major research paper.

And, realizing that, I realized that's probably why a lot of young students hate their English classes.

So here's how you write a research paper. If you don't know where to start, I'd recommend scrolling through this document until you find the header "How to Skim an Academic Article" and start there.

Good luck, and thanks for reading.

- Ms-Demeanor

Oh, also, there is swearing. ͇(ツ)͇

*Dedicated to all the professors who had to put up with me.
I deeply appreciate your patience, kindness,
and the knowledge you shared.*

Ms-Demeanor, AKA Alli, is a returning community college student with a BA in English Literature from Cal Poly Pomona. They are a cartoonist, blogger, writer, hacker, anarchist, and bastard. They don't want to get paid for this guide; they just want you to stress less about your homework.

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Identifying your subject and starting research

Okay, so you start by identifying the work that you're going to write the paper on. Most lit classes will announce in the syllabus that you'll have a paper due at the end of the term, and usually it will be a text that was covered in the class. The FIRST thing you should do is skim the Wikipedia pages of all the assigned readings. One of the BEST things that you can find on a Wikipedia page about a work you're considering for a research paper is a section discussing debated meanings or controversy about the text - this means that there is a LOT of material on the work you're going to break down.

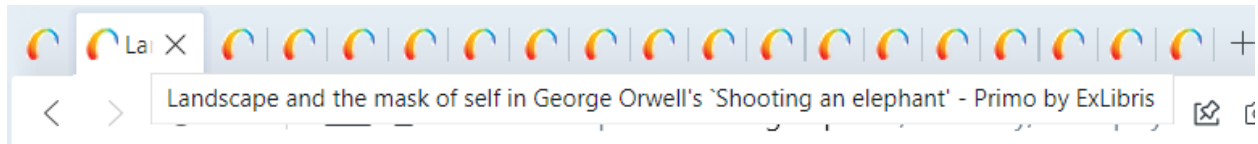
The reason to do this at the start of the class is twofold: One, it gives you more time to prepare for the paper, Two, you should know what the readings assigned at the end of the term look like before you panic and choose a work that the class has already covered. I have been in twenty English classes where pretty much no one went over the works assigned for the last couple weeks of the term. This is a mistake! Those works are usually assigned late in the term because they're what the rest of the term has been building to in terms of complexity and meaning, which, again, probably means that there's a metric fuckton of research on those readings.

Anyway. [I'm doing my paper on George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," which you can read here if you want to play along with this post.](#)

The next step is to read the work. If you have already read the work earlier in the class, now is the time to go back through and skim it to re-familiarize yourself with the text. You are making very big, very general notes. The notes that I made on this read-through were things like "baited," "performance of empire," "the ugliness of empire," and "performance to one another." You're just getting the biggest, vaguest ideas out, because now it's time to do your precis, which is not as precise as that name would imply.

The way that I approach a precis is as a very, very, very broad statement about what I think the work is saying and what I want to say about it. In this case I think Orwell is saying that imperialism is both cruel and pointless, that it is mutually degrading to those subject to empire and enforcing empire, and that it makes the world worse. Cool. Orwell doesn't like empire, that's not a surprise.

At this point I have a general idea of where I think I'm going to go with this paper (in the direction of performance; i'm going to talk about the way that Orwell fixates on empire as performative) and it is time to go dig up research.



[Image description: a browser header showing many open tabs with the alt-text or the open tab reading "Landscape and the mask of self in George Orwell's 'Shooting an elephant.'"]

nineteen articles later
















The reason you do your precis before you do research but that you do not write a thesis statement before you do research is because you need to guide your search, but you don't want to box yourself into a corner by only looking at one specific argument. For instance, for my Austen project I am examining radical politics in Austen's work but I have bought books written by biographers who understand her as a conservative as well as a whole book of marxist criticism of Austen that considers her a conservative; that is not totally in line with my reading of her work or her politics, but it's important to see what arguments people who **aren't** totally in line with my view of the matter make.

So what I have done for this Orwell paper is searched my school library's database for terms like "Orwell and Empire," "Orwell and Violence," "Orwell and Authority," "Orwell and Policing," and "Shooting an Elephant."

I went through the results from most to least relevant for each search, and opened them all in other tabs. I didn't read them, or even skim them, I just opened the database link to the articles in another tab. You DO NOT need to read every single one of these that you open, you do NOT need to read them one at a time before choosing to open another.

Okay, so, now that you've got a bunch of articles to sift through, you start an annotated bibliography. The way that I **personally** do this is to start by putting the info I will need to cite each of these articles/books/etc, into a document. I also create a new folder and download everything that I possibly can.

> This PC > Desktop > School > SaE Research

Name	Date modified	Type	Size
 A_postcolonial_reading_of_Shooting_an_...	11/5/2021 11:55 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	3,774 KB
 Club as colonial island in Passage to Indi...	11/5/2021 11:49 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	185 KB
 Ethics of Solidarity Through Orwell's writi...	11/5/2021 11:43 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	339 KB
 George Orwell and Liberal Guilt	11/5/2021 11:40 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	4,261 KB
 George_Orwell_socialism_and_utopia	11/5/2021 11:47 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	4,995 KB
 Imperial_OrwellOrwell_Imperial	11/5/2021 11:56 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	3,984 KB
 Landscape and the mask of self	11/5/2021 11:25 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	97 KB
 Narrative Hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and ...	11/5/2021 11:58 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	8,747 KB
 Not at Home in Empire	11/5/2021 11:54 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	1,463 KB
 Orwell and the Truth	11/5/2021 11:38 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	128 KB
 Orwell_as_Public_Intellectual	11/5/2021 11:26 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	204 KB
 Orwellian_comedy	11/5/2021 11:45 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	4,358 KB
 Orwell's Anti-Fascists	11/5/2021 11:52 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	834 KB
 The_Disappearance_of_1984	11/5/2021 11:41 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	150 KB
 This_side_of_the_barricades	11/5/2021 11:35 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	1,254 KB

[Image description: A screenshot of a file explorer window showing the directory This PC > Desktop > School > SaE Research. The folder has about a dozen PDFs of articles about George Orwell.]

Two of my sources were books that I have institutional permission to view but not to download, so I have those open in my browser.

Downloading is an important step. Download, download, download. Don't just leave these up in the browser and close them after you've skimmed them and decided they aren't necessary - download them because you could get a third of the way into your paper and realize that, actually, that WAS a necessary part of your paper and downloading will save you the hassle of trying to go find the paper online again (this is also why you START this process by getting the citation/publication info into a document).

At this stage you have STILL not read any of these documents. You are still NOT going to actually read them for at least one more step, you are going to start by skimming.

Your next step is to just skim each of these documents to see if they are *at all* relevant to your research paper.

So, for instance, that paper on "Landscape and the mask of self" is actually a paper on *geography,* not a paper on literary criticism. There's a good chance that it is not going to have anything to do with my topic, so I am going to skim it [pause for

skimming] and after skimming it, it's an intertextual exploration of geography and Orwell's story, history, and other writings on empire. This text **IS** relevant to my paper, which I now need to note in my bibliography document.

I'm not going to completely read this paper, yet, or pull any quotes out of it, I just make a note in my document that it touches on themes that will show up in my paper.

Then I move on to another document and skim it [pause for skimming] and it appears that "This Side of the Barricades" is okayish background on Orwell that I might use if I really need to justify a statement, but is more journalistic than literary and is not really on the subject of the work that I'm discussing. It is not useful to my paper, so I make a note of **why** it is not useful in my document.

What I also start doing at this point is sorting out "useful" and "not useful" with visual cues. I use a highlighter in my document, and I also change the titles of the PDFs so that they will be sorted in my file explorer with useful stuff at the top and less useful stuff at the bottom:

Landscape and the mask of self in George Orwell's 'Shooting an elephant'

Tyner, James A. *Area* (London 1969), 2005-09, Vol.37 (3), p.260-267

- Discussion of empire, discussion of eradication of self through race and empire; discards idea of elephant as symbolic of British empire.
















Stevenson, Nick. "Orwell as Public Intellectual: Anarchism, Communism and the New Left." *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, spring-summer 2021, pp. 19+.

Bell, Fraser. "This side of the barricades." *Queen's Quarterly*, vol. 109, no. 4, winter 2002, pp. 519+.

- Only passing mention of ~~SaE~~ more of a postwar history of the English left, not useful

Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'.

[Image description: A screenshot of a document showing two citations for articles, "Landscape and the mask of self in George Orwell's 'Shooting an Elephant'" and "Bell, Fraser. 'This side of the Barricades'" – the first word of the first citation is highlighted in teal, the first two words of the second citation are highlighted in red.]

	a - Landscape and the mask of self	11/5/2021 11:25 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	97 KB
	A_postcolonial_reading_of_Shooting_an_...	11/5/2021 11:55 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	3,774 KB
	Club as colonial island in Passage to Indi...	11/5/2021 11:49 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	185 KB
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	Narrative Hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and ...	11/5/2021 11:58 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	8,747 KB
	Not at Home in Empire	11/5/2021 11:54 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	1,463 KB
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	Orwell_as_Public_Intellectual	11/5/2021 11:26 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	204 KB
	Orwellian_comedy	11/5/2021 11:45 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	4,358 KB
	Orwell's Anti-Fascists	11/5/2021 11:52 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	834 KB
	The_Disappearance_of_1984	11/5/2021 11:41 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	150 KB
	z - This_side_of_the_barricades	11/5/2021 11:35 AM	Microsoft Edge PD...	1,254 KB

[Image Description: A screenshot of the same folder full of articles from earlier, but now the first document has had its file name changed to start with "a" and the last one has had its file name changed to start with "z."]

And that is all for the moment. I'll write more once I've skimmed all my possible sources but I'm getting worried that tumblr is going to crash and eat this post.

How to Skim a Book for Research

If you need to skim a BOOK rather than an article, that is also a multi-step process.

First, you read the table of contents to see if the ToC has any direct references to the subject you're exploring or has any chapter titles that touch on the issues you're looking at. "Doublesness and the Value of Decency" has a section titled "learning how to write about Orwell" and includes an exploration of *Burmese Days*, which means there's at least a bit of material that is in the correct ballpark for what I want to talk about in this book.

After you read the table of contents, skip to the end and read the index. Look for your subject.

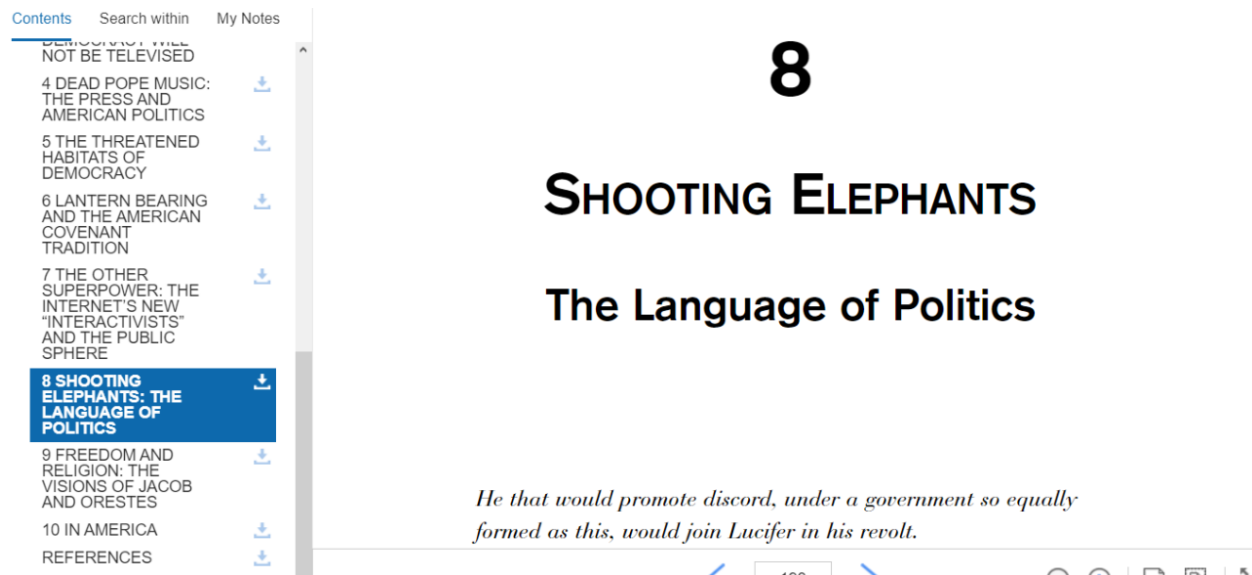
Pittock, Malcolm, 180–81n. 5	Sanderson, Richard K., 182n. 9
political correctness, 28	Shelden, Michael, 31, 170n. 3
“Politics and the English Language,” xi, xii	“Shooting an Elephant,” 27, 130, 171n. 3
privilege, 18	Showstack Sassoon, Anne, 103
propaganda and force, 111, 146	Siegel, Paul, 175n. 4

[Image description: two columns of text from a book's index reading:

Pittock, Malcolm, 180-81n. 5
 Political correctness, 28
 “Politics and the English Language,” xi, xii
 Privilege, 18
 Propaganda and force, 111, 146
 Sanderson, Richard K., 182n.9
 Shelden, Michael, 31, 170n.3
 “Shooting an Elephant” 27, 130, 171n. 3
 Showstack Sassoon, Anne, 103
 Seigel, Paul, 175n.4]

The story I'm writing about is referenced three times, so I can hang on to this book and move on to skimming other works, but there is not going to be a ton of material for me to work with here.

The other book that came up in my search has a whole chapter that plays off the title of the story I'm researching:



[Image description: A screenshot of an ebook viewer showing a table of contents on the left-hand side with Chapter 8 highlighted. On the right side is an image of a chapter header that says "8, Shooting Elephants, The Language of Politics."]

But the book as a whole doesn't seem useful, since it's about politics in post-9/11 America. So Just in case, I'm going to skim by checking the first sentence of the first few paragraphs of this chapter.

- "George Orwell did not have a good opinion of the language of politics."
- "Ten years before penning his analysis of the emptiness of political language, Orwell, in his first great essay, told a story from his days as a subdivisional policeman in British-ruled Burma."
- " 'Don't think of an elephant,' advises linguist and cognitive scientist George Lakoff."
- "Our inability to not think of an elephant illustrates the way language frames work."
- "One of the ways negative political attacks work is they can force the target of the attack to invoke the negative frame while denying it."

These are all the first sentences of the introductory part of the chapter. This is not useful for my assignment, I don't have to look at this book anymore. But I WILL make a note of why it's not useful in my bibliography document, and I will note how and where the other book might be useful.

The politics of deceit : saving freedom and democracy from extinction. Smith, Glenn W., 1953- author. 2004.

- Book about American post-9/11 politics, not useful to my paper

George Orwell, Doubtless, and the Value of Decency. Stewart, Anthony. George Orwell, Doubtless, and the Value of Decency, 2003, Vol.32

- Per index, three references to SaE, intro includes section on writing on Orwell

[Image description: A screenshot of a document showing two citations, "The politics of deceit" which has a note underneath that says "Book about American post-9/11 politics, not useful to my paper" and "George Orwell, Doubtless, and the Value of Decency" with the note "per index, three references to SaE, intro includes section on writing on Orwell.]"

PRO TIP: as you are skimming and checking, check the bibliographies and works cited sections of what you are skimming. One of the papers I've downloaded is referenced in one of the books I skimmed and in the bibliography of another paper. That likely means that it is VERY relevant and means that I'm going to pay more attention to it when I do my first full reading of it.

ALSO PRO TIP: As I'm selecting what sources to skim I typically work backwards from the sources I think I'm less likely to use to the sources that I'm more likely to use. I'll typically check the things from the geography journals, ethics journals, and political books first before I move on to articles from books with Orwell as their sole topic, articles that directly address what I want to cover in the title of the article, etc.

I find that it saves time to first narrow down the field of what you'll be looking at, instead of immediately diving into things you want to take a lot of notes or pull a lot of quotes from. It's really easy to end up spending an hour looking at a twenty page paper, get a lot of good info out, then step back and realize you have another fourteen papers to go through and lose some steam. Knock seven less useful papers out of the way first, THEN dive into the good shit.

How to Skim an Academic Article

For the record, here's how to skim a paper:

- 1 - Read all the titles of all the sections
- 2 - Read the first paragraph, then the first three sentences of the next three paragraphs.
- 3 - Read the conclusion.
- 4 - Either text search or just look through the text for words relating to your area of focus (in this case I'd probably be looking for "white" "empire" and "imperialism").
- 5 - If you're still not sure if the paper is a good source for you or not, read the first and last sentence of a few paragraphs.

This *should* be enough to give you the general idea of what a paper is about, if the author is in the same ballpark as you are in their interpretation of the text, and if it's going to be a text that you can work with.

For instance, skimming the geography paper didn't mean that I read the whole thing, but I read the headers and some of the pullquotes and the conclusion, and in handling the text I almost put it aside because it uses the kind of academic language that drives me up the wall and that seems particularly ironic when applied to Orwell. I decided to keep it because it has some very pertinent-seeming sections, but I know that when I deal with it, it is going to be frustrating to read.

One of the papers that I've got in the "maybe" pile is there because its analysis is from a feminist lens instead of a postcolonial lens and so it focuses on patriarchy instead of on imperialism.

One of the papers in the "no" pile is there because its tone is too unacademic and it reads like something out of Time Magazine.

This is what you're looking for in your skimming. "Does it address the topic I'm researching?" "Is this a paper that *I* can understand?" "Does the paper explore the topic that I'm researching in a way that is relevant to my approach to the work?" You're *still* not reading these papers. That still comes later.

A First Pass at Reviewing Your Research and Categorizing It

Okay, you (I) have completed your first skim of all of your potential sources. You have pared down your field considerably - now it must be time to read the papers, right?

Wrong!

Probably at this point in your research, the plan you had in your precis has changed. I am still interested on writing about Orwell and Empire, but skimming has made me more attentive of stuff that I had been overlooking before. There **IS** an element of performance that is important to the story, but now I think that's maybe a paragraph or two of something that's a larger point. So I rework my approach a bit: George Orwell doesn't like empire, sure, fine. That's not a surprise. However, for someone who doesn't like empire and is talking about how evil it is, the narrator of this work sure does hate the Burmese people a lot and there is, in fact, a lot of racism going on here.

Four of the papers that I looked through discuss this, and two of them discuss it in depth. So, okay, now I'm writing about Orwell and Empire and Race and the performance of whiteness. Cool. Keep your new approach in mind, and then organize your sources in a new document in order of most to least pertinent to the argument that is taking shape in your head.

As I do my first skim, I have a 4-tier system, Good, Okay, Okay I guess, and Nope. I started with 19 sources I was looking at, immediately dropped that to 17, and now my "good" and "okay" list have a total of ten sources, so I only move the top ten over to my new document. If you have fewer than ten "good" sources keep some of your "okay I guess" sources on the new document.

The 4 Tiers of Supporting Material are something like:

Good - Talks about the work that I'm exploring extensively OR another work by the same author on the same subject; explores the work through the analytical lens that I'm using to approach the topic; explores the same concepts that I'm looking at, but also makes me consider new concepts about the work.

Okay - Talks about the work I'm exploring and/or other works by the same author on the topic. May explore the author in question as part of a larger conversation comparing other authors (Kipling and Forster were common in this, all three being English authors who had written about the British in India). Perhaps uses a different analytic lens, or is slightly off-topic in terms of approach (cross discipline geography paper and paper from the utopian studies journal aren't Lit papers per se, but they'll do).

Okay I Guess - Mentions the work you're researching as a footnote in a larger discussion, uses an analytical framework in the same neighborhood as your approach (a marxist approach to a work you're examining through a postcolonial lens is probably going to have one or two lines you can use; a psychoanalytic paper might not).

Nope - Off topic, irrelevant. The name of your subject might come up but is not discussed. Using this paper in your assignment would be a disingenuous grab for sources because you couldn't find enough pertinent information and your professor WILL notice this.

So you have sorted all your papers into a different document and you have ordered them from most to least helpful, surely now is the time that you actually read them, right?

Wrong! Open your two best sources and look in their bibliographies.

ALAM, Mohammad Sarwar. 2006. "Orwell's 'Shooting an Elephant': Reflections on Imperialism and Neoimperialism." *IIUC Studies* 3: 5-62.

[Image description: A screenshot of a citation for Mohammad Sawar Alam's "Orwell's 'Shooting an Elephant': Reflections on Imperialism and Neoimperialism."]

INGLE, Stephen. 1998. "The Anti-Imperialism of George Orwell." In *George Orwell: Contemporary Critical Essays*, edited by Graham Holderness, Bryan Loughrey and Nahem Yousafeds, 228-48. New York: St. Martin's P.

[Image description: A screenshot of a citation for Stephen Ingle's "The Anti-Imperialism of George Orwell."]

These weren't in my initial searches, now I need to see if I can go find them. [pause for searching] I don't have institutional access to Stephen Ingle's paper, but I was able to just find Mohammad Sawar Alam's paper online and download it. After a quick skim, it gets added to my bibliography.

So now, surely, it must be time to read these papers?

Nope!

Now it's time for you to re-read your primary document, this time you're making more notes. And I'll be back later when I've got more notes.

Reading your academic sources

At this point in your writing process you should be miserable and doubting yourself. Don't worry! That's normal!

The tension and doubt that you are experiencing are because you are changing how you thought about the work in the first place.

Personally, I'm torn between the feeling that Orwell intentionally made the speaker of "Shooting an Elephant" exceptionally racist in order to underscore the idea that the Raj was specifically structured to amplify and widen racial divisions and the feeling that Orwell was just pretty racist.

I'm not personally familiar with enough of Orwell's works from this era or specifically about empire to say, and this is something on which my sources are conflicted.

This is made more difficult by the fact that this work is alternately described as an essay and as a story; whether it is a work of pure fiction or if it is supposed to recount an actual incident is debatable, and that makes a difference because that would clear up if Orwell is narrating his own thoughts or if he is narrating the thoughts of an unnamed speaker who shares exaggerated versions of Orwell's opinions.

I can't make up my mind yet, and I don't have to, because now it is time to read my sources.

Please note, I am now several hours into working on this paper, I have read the work that I'm analyzing at least four times, and I do not yet have a specific thesis.

When you are writing a paper like this you ***DO NOT*** settle into a thesis that you're going to argue for until you are DEEP into the process.

So now, let's go through the steps of reading some literary criticism together. This is an active process even on the first read, and this is part of why your annotated bibliography is going to be ***annotated.***

I'm going to start with Alan Blackstock's "Narrative Hysteria" essay, which [I am delighted to have found under a digital commons license, so I can link it here for you to read along](#). Blackstock's essay approaches the work of three English writers discussing the British Raj. Blackstock is examining these authors through a feminist lens. His discussion of Orwell is largely limited to the novel *Burmese Days*, which I have not read, but Blackstock is discussing empire in Orwell, so this is fairly relevant to my research. This is one of my "okay" sources. I have already done a quick skim of the

essay once, so I know the discussion of Orwell is limited to pages 193-199, and that there is some talk of empire in the conclusion; I noted this in my annotated bibliography when I was doing my first fast survey.

This is one of sub-optimal sources, so I am not going to read it multiple times.

Start by carefully reading the first few hundred words of the essay. You want to know what the paper is talking about to know how relevant it is to your research, but you don't want to waste time reading a few thousand words about a book you're not familiar with by an author who you're not reading. I don't need to read Blackstock's analysis of Kipling to parse his thoughts on Orwell. So read the introduction. [pause for reading] Having read the introduction, I see strong parallels between the portrayal of empire in *Burmese Days* and "Shooting an Elephant." I'm going to need to be somewhat familiar with *Burmese Days* to get more out of this, so I am going to read the Wikipedia plot summary of the novel; the novel comes up in other sources I have so now is a good time to get a basic handle on the story.

Now that I've read the introduction and a summary of the work that this essay is primarily discussing, I am going to skim the discussion of Kipling and then start reading the section on Orwell. (Even if Kipling isn't relevant to my research, essays are often internally referential so likely the section I care about will refer to the section on Kipling).

Because I am only going to read this once, I am going to do it with my annotated bibliography open in another window, and I'm going to copy potentially relevant sections of text into the annotated bibliography as I go.

When I started today my annotated bibliography had 438 words just for the citations of the 10 collected sources. After reading the Orwell section of Blackstock's essay I now have 788 words. I'm going to skim the section on Forster and then read the conclusion closely.

I am now laughing because the entire conclusion is relevant to my paper and I have added another 400 words to my document, including two citations made by Blackstock that I may need to cite if I cite this section of his conclusion.

However, the whole purpose of reading this source was to mine it for resources and close the document and never have to open it again. I have a brief note about what Blackstock's essay is about, four long sections of the text copied into my bibliography that I may quote in my paper, brief notes about each of those sections explaining why they're relevant to my research.

Blackstock, Alan. "Beyond the pale: women, cultural contagion, and narrative hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and Forster." *ARIEL*, vol. 36, no. 1-2, Jan.-Apr. 2005, pp. 183+.

- 193-199 for discussion of Burmese days, some discussion of colonialism in the conclusion as well; very different perspective as a feminist reading rather than postcolonial.
- The East has corrupted him by making him contemptuous of both the Burmese he oversees and the English who oversee him (195)
- "That futile accident," the narrator and readers know, was no accident, but the result of U Po Kyin's carefully orchestrated plot to discredit Flory and thus eliminate his support for Veraswami's membership in the club, leaving the way open for U Po Kyin to enjoy the status of being selected as the first non-English member. But if Flory had not rejected Ma Hla May in hopes of marrying Elizabeth, U Po Kyin would have had no scandal to use against Flory, and his plot against Veraswami would have come to naught. (198) – **Similar to the narrator's predicament in SaE; he is only miserable trying to enforce empire because of the empire his people created in the first place.**

[Image description: A Citation for Alan Blackstock's "Beyond the pale: women, cultural, with notes underneath reading:

- 193-199 for discussion of Burmese days, some discussion of colonialism in the conclusion as well; very different perspective as a feminist reading rather than postcolonial.
- The east has corrupted him by making him contemptuous of both the Burmese he oversees and the English who oversee him (195)
- "That futile accident," the narrator and readers know, was no accident, but the result of U Po Kyin's carefully orchestrated plot to discredit Flory and thus eliminate his support for Veraswami's membership in the club, leaving the way open for U Po Kyin to enjoy the status of being selected as the first non-English member. But if Flory had not rejected Ma Hla May in hopes of marrying Elizabeth, U Po Kyin would have had no scandal to use against Flory, and his plot against Veraswami would have come to naught. (198) – Similar to the narrator's predicament in SaE; he is only miserable trying to enforce empire because of the empire his people created in the first place.]

The point of reading Blackstock's paper in this way and collecting the quotes in an annotated bibliography is to close the paper and never need to open it again. All of the sections of this paper that are useful to me are now in one place with my notes about my thoughts on in. When I sit down to put my arguments in an organized essay I do

not want to have to flip back and forth between ten documents and page through them looking for the quote that I need and struggle to remember if it was in the essay on empire written by the Iranian sociologist or if it was the one written by the American geologist.

Your annotated bibliography is the most work that you will do on any research paper. It is where you transcribe or copy relevant text quotations, it is where you make your arguments to yourself, it is where you will eventually copy or transcribe the sections of your primary text to figure out what in-text evidence there is for the argument you are making.

Okay. We have read one paper. I have two papers listed that I've determined I need to read twice and nine other sources that need a reading similar to this one. I'll see you when I'm done with the other sources like this and it's time to go through a close-read paper.

Reassessing your approach

Depending on what kind of obsessive weirdo you are and how prolific the author you're researching is, please be ready for your "fast reads of mediocre sources" to involve reading a minimum of four more essays from the author that you will have to incorporate into your paper. (I am currently less convinced of Orwell's racism than I was this morning and it has a lot to do with [several essays and one book discussing Orwell's repeated use of animals as representatives for oppressed people because he was aware of and disgusted by the fact that the English - himself included - could forgive racism but drew the line at animal abuse](#)).

So I'm not precisely back to the drawing board, but as I read further I am continuing to adjust my expectations for how my paper is going to come together and how many sources I'm going to include.

This part of the process is IMPORTANT. It is REALLY important if you're later in your college career and are writing about a subject that you ostensibly know well, but it is still important even if you are just supposed to be writing for a low-level class. Part of why you cast a wide net with your research is to broadly familiarize yourself with the state of the research on your subject. I mentioned earlier that I wasn't personally familiar with enough of Orwell's work to comment on the combined topics of racism and imperialism, but the scholars who have written about this have written a lot about it and conveniently discuss the same works a lot - my "okay" sources on Orwellian Comedy and *Doubleness and Decency* both heavily referenced the essay that I just

linked and the introduction to *Doubleness and Decency* has a whole section on race in Orwell. Now I know that instead of searching that book for "Shooting an Elephant," I need to search it for "Marrakech" to get the information that is pertinent to my topic. I'm going to continue reading the introduction and once I'm done with that I will repeat my process of searching the index for references to the texts I'm now adding to my pile-o-references.

Limiting your Scope

Okay. So.

This is a hard thing you may encounter if you are researching a compelling subject that you are personally interested in that has a significant amount of controversy.

I have now read three more essays by my original author because I found myself profoundly disagreeing with one of the sources I was looking at. I have now also found two more external sources, one of which is a full length book of criticism that I'm 28 pages into reading.

If you are experiencing this, you are experiencing scope creep.

What you do at this point is open a new window, put the new essays and sources into that new window, minimize it, and go back to your annotated bibliography. You have to put on blinders. You will get through those other sources eventually, but if you just keep indiscriminately researching you're going to fail to write your five page essay because you got engaged in writing a fifty page thesis. If it's REALLY that interesting you'll still be interested in writing about it later, and if it was REALLY that pertinent to your paper it would have showed up in your first search of the subject.

This is another place where your annotated bibliography can come in handy: I found myself profoundly disagreeing with a specific postcolonial interpretation of Orwell that I don't think is just poorly argued, I think it's a willful misinterpretation. Now is a good time for me to prioritize reading other papers that use a similar lens to see if they seem similarly disingenuous to me.

(There is a difference between disagreeing with an essay's conclusions based on different readings of a text and disagreeing because you think that an essay's premise is based on a blatantly incorrect or uncharitable interpretation of a work; the first can still be helpful in making and shaping your argument, the second is more troubling and less useful.)

BUT! As you go, if you find that something is totally useless and you have not added any text extracts or notes to your annotated bibliography, remove the citation! As it turns out the geography paper had a citation on nearly every line and was extremely up its own ass, and the ethics paper was a fine ethics paper with nothing to say about literature. I don't have to worry about those anymore, so I'm removing sources as I'm collecting more sources to look into.

Investigating your research and forming counterarguments and how to skim additional work by the subject of your paper

Okay, so of the original 19 sources that I found, five have survived my reading and weeding process and are alive and well in my annotated bibliography.

The document has gone from under 500 words of pure source listings to over 3300 words of notes and copy/pasted citations.

For the record: I will likely use significantly fewer than a thousand words of direct quotation in my final paper. I will probably use under 200 words of direct quotation [in the end I used 453 words of direct quotation in a 3200 word paper]. What I have done is I have pulled significant, multi-paragraph chunks out that will give *me* the context I need to ensure that I'm using the quote appropriately to inform the reader and make my argument. The reader will see very little of this actual work, but an experienced reader reading an experienced writer will know to assume that this is the level of effort going on in the background.

So, enough about that, now on to my four new sources. We're going to explore the exciting world of readmores today, because first we're talking about how to read your subject-author's further writings and chuck those in your bibliography as supporting evidence.

So this is going to be "how to read a short story or essay by your subject author to include as supporting evidence for your argument"

In particular, I will be looking at Orwell's ["The Lion and the Unicorn,"](#) which is linked so that you can play along if you'd like.

Okay, so in one of the readings that I did yesterday that frustrated me, an author paraphrased some statements from "The Lion and the Unicorn" ("LatU") that seemed disingenuous, so I opened the essay and didn't even skim it, I just searched for the relevant term ("India") and read the paragraphs that included that word. In that initial

bout of searching and scrolling, I realized that this essay is a useful document for comparing how Orwell articulated his thoughts on empire in his early career and after a few years of development as a writer and a political thinker ("SaE" was 1936, "LatU" was 1941).

I have not read the full essay (it's about 20k words long, I likely won't read the full thing for this assignment). The first thing that I do is scroll through the essay and look at the format. It's got three chapters, each of which is divided up into sections with Roman numerals. I am now going to read the first few paragraphs of each major section.

The first chapter is about nationalism and a national character, the second chapter is about socialism, and the third chapter is about revolution; all of the chapters area about war.

As I scrolled through this time I was moving more slowly, and noticed a section in the final third of the book that has a slightly different structure; it is a six-point plan that Orwell is proposing. I make a note of its location, because if you find a structured plan anywhere in a book or essay, it is probably pretty important to the author.

From here, I read the first paragraph of each section in the first chapter, and the first sentence of every paragraph in between, pausing periodically if something catches my eye.

After that skim I've made notes for a couple places that might be relevant to return back to but it does largely seem to be about defining national character and talking about preparedness for war, so I move on to chapter two and I'm going to do the same thing, read the first paragraph of each section and the first sentence of each paragraph after that.

This is a much shorter chapter (the first chapter is nearly half of the book) and interesting politically, but not to the literary argument that I'm making.

Part of why I'm not just searching key terms on this read-through is because the context of the whole essay is important; I don't want to cherry-pick my arguments so seeing Orwell's arguments about the British character does actually matter.

I'm now on to the final chapter, which is the one I know had the highest keyword density in my search last night and which I know has a suggestion for a structured plan, so I'm going to read every other paragraph or so to get a closer look at this chapter than at the other two.

Again, I am paying specific attention to discussions of empire and imperialism.

When I get to the six-point plan, I see that these are points 4 and 5:

- IV. Immediate Dominion status for India, with power to secede when the war is over.
- V. Formation of an Imperial General Council, in which the coloured peoples are to be represented.

And I know that I'm going to pay a lot of attention to those (the others I will skim as I have been doing).

I ended up copying about 1400 words of text into my bibliography and I have made some notes on my thoughts. Reading much more of this essay than the isolated chunks I read last night significantly changed my opinions on a lot of it, but I still believe it is relevant to my argument.

EDIT - one thing I forgot to add: if at all possible, I will avoid using a website as my source for an essay because I really prefer to be able to use page numbers, so while I read this from the orwell foundation's site, I will be citing an ebook of a canadian republication of an edition produced in England in the 80s because that's what I was able to find online and get page numbers for.

I have two more essays from Orwell to read (those are shorter and I will actually *read* them), so the next post I make in this chain will be on *reading* a short work for inclusion in your source material.

Doing a thorough reading of an additional work by your subject

The next piece that I'm reading is another work of Orwell's that is set in Burma; it is just under 2000 words long and it has been mentioned by at least five of the authors who I have been reading for my research project, so it is important to include. Because it is so short I am actually going to *read* the thing, so here are the instructions for reading a short work of fiction/personal experience essay/letter that you will be citing in your research paper.

This particular work is [George Orwell's "A Hanging,"](#) and is linked if you'd like to read along.

So the first step here is to set aside all your highlighters and notepads and bookmarks, and to actually just read the work. You're reading for content, not for depth, so a quick read will do on the first go around.

Once I have read for content I will mentally compare it to the other stories I'm working with and what I have learned from the criticism that I've read.

- On a first pass the things that I immediately notice is the story's focus on tonal incongruities; the dog, the condemned man praying, the laughter and relief of the guards and wardens when the hanging is done.
- There is an interest in humanization that is not present in "SaE" especially with respect to avoiding the puddle. This narrator doesn't hate the natives around him the way that the narrator of "SaE" does, but he is also unreflective and incurious - no one asks why this man is being hanged. The narrator of "SaE" is more personally involved and more personally revolted by what he has seen and done.
- Like "SaE" there is a sense of "just following orders" and of doing the expected.
- Also absent from "A Hanging" is the same kind of self-loathing criticism and focus on ridicule. People don't want the dog there because it's "inappropriate" but the fact that the dog makes their actions a farce is implied, not explicit.

Now that I've had some thoughts about the thing, I will read it through one more time. This will be another quick reading, except that I will spend more time on the parts that I found interesting; I will be looking for any repetition or parallels or symbolism.

- Both stories have the narrator wishing for or celebrating a local man's death (in neither case do they want the men dead for the sake of seeing them dead, but to relieve the narrator in some way; in A Hanging it is to stop the condemned man's frightening chanting, in "SaE" it is because the man's death means less trouble for the narrator after he has killed the elephant)
- There are layers of complicity at play; the narrator of A Hanging is complicit in imperialism; Francis and the other wardens at the jail work with the colonizers to subjugate the prisoners, the hangman is a prisoner who hangs other prisoners. It seems like at every step down the ladder there's someone worse off acting as a warning to the person on the step above them.
- There is a significantly more developed sense of loathing in SaE
- Difference in action for the narrator is stark; in a hanging he ties up a dog and witnesses a hanging, but is largely passive. In SaE he participates viscerally. Even the deaths are drastically different, calm and distant and hidden by the gallows vs. the Indian crushed in the mud or the slow, labored death of the elephant. Narrator in SaE comments that the dead look devilish, narrator in Hanging describes the condemned man as dead as a stone and oscillating slightly.

So now that I've read the whole story twice and have collected some thoughts/notes, I will go through and read the story one more time, copying selections of text into my annotated bibliography.

At this point my annotated bibliography is twelve single spaced pages and over six thousand words. It is sort of a messy combination of poorly formatted citations (copying and pasting from PDFs sucks so much) and half-formed thoughts and

squabbles I'm having with the authors of various articles. There's inconsistent highlighting, and nothing is in order.

This does not have to be orderly yet, I am still, largely, in the brainstorming phase of this project even though I have now read literally hundreds of pages of fiction, theory, and criticism.

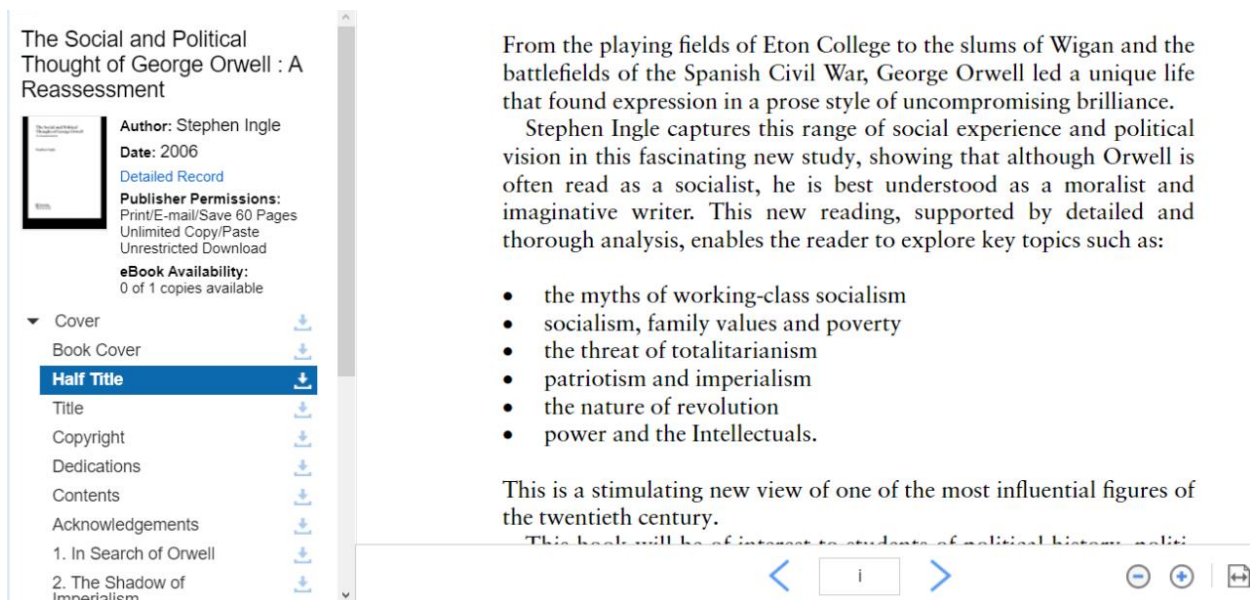
But I'm getting into the home stretch on the research side of things! I'm going to finish compiling information from my remaining Orwell essay, and tomorrow I will be back to teach you how to read a whole ass book of literary criticism.

Brute Forcing a Source: How to "read" an entire book of scholarly literature in a couple of hours

By now you should have looked away from your assignment for a moment then looked back to realize that it's due in about 72 hours.

Now is time to do what I call "brute forcing your source." This is how to "read" an entire book on a tight deadline.

This book has a handy pre-introduction introduction, so I get the most basic outline of the book possible from the first few pages:



The Social and Political Thought of George Orwell : A Reassessment

Author: Stephen Ingle
Date: 2006
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- Contents
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- 1. In Search of Orwell
- 2. The Shadow of Imperialism

From the playing fields of Eton College to the slums of Wigan and the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell led a unique life that found expression in a prose style of uncompromising brilliance. Stephen Ingle captures this range of social experience and political vision in this fascinating new study, showing that although Orwell is often read as a socialist, he is best understood as a moralist and imaginative writer. This new reading, supported by detailed and thorough analysis, enables the reader to explore key topics such as:

- the myths of working-class socialism
- socialism, family values and poverty
- the threat of totalitarianism
- patriotism and imperialism
- the nature of revolution
- power and the Intellectuals.

This is a stimulating new view of one of the most influential figures of the twentieth century.

This book will be of interest to students of political history, politics

[Image description: A screenshot of an Ebook reader showing the title "The Social and Political Thought of George Orwell: A Reassessment" and publication information on the left-hand side, with text on the right side that reads:

From the playing fields of Eton College to the slums of Wigan and the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell led a unique life that found expression in a prose style of uncompromising brilliance.

Stephen Ingle captures this range of social experience and political vision in this fascinating new study, showing that although Orwell is often read as a socialist he is best understood as a moralist and imaginative writer. This new reading, supported by detailed and thorough analysis, enables the reader to explore such key topics as:

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This is a stimulating new view of one of the most influential figures of the twentieth century.]

Sweet, this covers a lot of ground on imperialism. I know this author has been criticized by two of my other sources for hand-waving the racism in Orwell's Burmese stories, so that's something to pay specific attention to as I read.

<div> <div>Contents</div> <div>Search within</div> <div>My Notes</div> </div> <div> <div> <div> <div>The Social and Political Thought of George Orwell : A Reassessment</div> <div> <div>Author: Stephen Ingle</div> <div>Date: 2006</div> <div>Detailed Record</div> <div>Publisher Permissions:</div> <div>Print/E-mail/Save 60 Pages</div> <div>Unlimited Copy/Paste</div> <div>Unrestricted Download</div> <div>eBook Availability:</div> <div>0 of 1 copies available</div> </div> </div> <div> <div>▼ Cover</div> <div>Book Cover</div> <div>Half Title</div> <div>Title</div> <div>Copyright</div> <div>Dedications</div> <div>Contents</div> <div>Acknowledgements</div> <div>1. In Search of Orwell</div> <div>2. The Shadow of Imperialism</div> <div>3. The Poor, The Workers and the 'Decency Myth'</div> </div> </div> </div>	<div> <div>Acknowledgements</div> <div>xi</div> <div>1 In search of Orwell</div> <div>1</div> <div>2 The shadow of imperialism</div> <div>28</div> <div>3 The poor, the workers and the 'decency myth'</div> <div>46</div> <div>4 To the barricades and back</div> <div>69</div> <div>5 Family and nation</div> <div>92</div> <div>6 Two plus two equals four</div> <div>114</div> <div>7 Orwell, socialism and the soul of man</div> <div>140</div> <div>8 Orwell's social and political thought</div> <div>162</div> <div>Notes</div> <div>183</div> <div>Bibliography</div> <div>211</div> </div>
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[Image description: A screenshot of an ebook reader showing the table of contents for "The Social and political Thought of George Orwell: a Reassessment that includes the following chapters:

- 1 – In search of Orwell
- 2 – The shadow of imperialism
- 3 – The poor, the workers and the 'decency myth'
- 4 – To the barricades and back
- 5 – Family and nation
- 6 – Two plus two equals four
- 7 – Orwell, socialism and the soul of man
- 8 – Orwell's social and political thought]

The table of contents is something that you should always, always read and think about when you're reading academic literature. This book is divided into eight chapters that are about 20-30 pages each. I know I'm going to focus a lot on chapter two, but like I've mentioned before, academic literature builds on itself so chapter two will likely rely on a lot of ground covered by chapter one.

Everything else seems relatively out-of-bounds for my focus, but I will also pay special attention to discussions of political thought in chapter 8.

So, my plan at the moment is to quickly read chapter one, closely read chapter two, then speed-read the rest.

It's currently 11:10 am.

It's now 11:28 am and

The Social and Political Thought of George Orwell : A Reassessment

Author: Stephen Ingle
Date: 2006
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- 1. In Search of Orwell**
- 2. The Shadow of Imperialism

clarify and classify what it was that inspired Orwell to write. One consequence of giving prominence to Orwell as primarily an imaginative writer is that in analysing his social and political thought, it makes sense to concentrate primarily upon his major works. In the next chapter, then, we shall be looking at inequality and imperialism primarily through *Burmese Days* and a number of the better-known essays. In Chapter 3 we shall explore Orwell's attitudes to poverty, family and the working-class through *Down and Out in Paris and London*, *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* and *The Road to Wigan Pier*. In Chapter 4 we shall be considering Orwell's views on the nature of revolution, principally through *Homage to Catalonia* and *Animal Farm*. In Chapter 5 we shall be examining Orwell the patriot, primarily through *The Lion and the Unicorn* and *Coming Up for Air*. Chapter 6 will be concerned with Orwell's reaction to the threat of totalitarianism, principally through *Nineteen Eighty Four*, and essays such as *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. Chapter 7 will consider Orwell's general theories on the nature of socialism as a political and moral system. The chief work studied here will be *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Finally, Chapter 8 will summarise Orwell's socialism, categorise it and assess its significance for modern social and political thought generally.

One last point before we begin. I believe it is essential, when discussing Orwell's work, to try to make a distinction between the imaginative and the non-fictional work. I have opted for imaginative and not fictional as a descriptor because so much of his work is based on

[Image description: An ebook reader showing a block of text from "The Social and Political thought of George Orwell: A Reassessment" that reads:

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One last point before we begin. I believe it is essential, when discussing Orwell's work, to try to make a distinction between the imaginative and the non-fictional work. I have opted for imaginative and not fictional as a descriptor because so much of his work is based on]

Thank you, Stephen Ingle, for laying out exactly what works will be discussed in exactly which chapters. I now know I'm going to be paying special attention to chapters two and five, but can likely do a more general reading of chapter eight.

12:12. Sometimes academics are just really fucking funny:

"According to Orwell, who was not a man to allow his almost complete ignorance on the subject to be a constraint, Sheffield was 'the ugliest town in the Old World.'"

1:05 - I've gotten through the body of the book and am on to the notes, which I'm going to read after a brief break. I will probably spend more time reading the notes than I did some of the previous chapters.

When you're trying to get through a book like this, and do it fast, you're looking for arguments, not absorbing prose. I try to give myself between thirty seconds to two minutes a page to grasp the meaning of each paragraph in brief and move on to the next. In three days I will probably not be able to tell you about anything that I read in this book, but by making notes and selecting quotes as I go I have been building a

foundation that I can quickly reference if I want to return to it in the research paper that I'm writing.

I'm going to go over the notes more carefully because notes are often less formal and may give commentary that an author didn't want to clutter up an already long chapter with, so I will be focusing on notes from chapters one and two, but I will still read all the notes more carefully than I read the middle chapters of the book.

-
- 59 In fairness to Orwell, he later wrote a generally supportive essay on Gandhi. He thought him unrealistic and unworldly in the pejorative sense, and did not much like him, but he recognised that if Britain and India were to settle down to a mutually supportive relationship it would be because Gandhi had conducted his struggle for independence without rancour ('Reflections on Gandhi', *Partisan Review*, January 1949, *CEJL* 4, pp. 463–70).
- 60 Orwell, *Time and Tide*, 31 May 1941.
- 61 Christopher Hitchens, *Orwell's Victory*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001, p. 25.
- 62 Near the end of his life, for example, Orwell quoted a representative of a minority people in Burma telling him that he hoped the British would rule for 200 years so that his people would not be ruled by the Burmese ('As I Please', *Tribune*, 7 February 1947).
- 63 Terry Eagleton, *The Rise of English*, quoted in Kenneth Quin, *How Literature Works*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992, p. 22.

[Image description: a screenshot of a book's endnotes including two brief paragraphs and three citations. The paragraphs read:

59) In fairness to Orwell, he later wrote a generally supportive essay on Gandhi. He thought him unrealistic and unworldly in the pejorative sense, and did not much like him, but he recognized] that if Britain and India were to settle down to a mutually supportive relationship it would be because Gandhi had conducted his struggle for independence without rancour.

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My friends, reading the notes is IMPORTANT. I am absolutely going to track down that "As I Please" column in one of the collected editions available on archive.org.

Academics continue to be very funny:

87 Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, p. 150.

90 Not everyone shares my concern. In 'Orwell and Patriotism', Rossi refers to the analogy as 'one of Orwell's most brilliant insights'. He does not develop this point.

[Image description: A screenshot of an endnote which reads:

90) Not everyone shares my concern. In 'Orwell and Patriotism,' Rossi refers to the analogy as 'one of Orwell's most brilliant insights.' He does not develop this point.]

Okay, so after thoughtfully reading about fifty pages of this book and carelessly reading a hundred and sixty, I skim over the index to see if there are any references to the topics I'm exploring that I may have missed.

Note that this is the reverse of how I skim a book - in skimming a book I read the table of contents first, then the index, then maybe the introduction and definitely the related pages from the index. When **reading** I'm just using the index to make sure that I didn't miss anything when I was forcing myself to work through pages quickly.

For the record: this is MUCH easier with books that use relatively plain language. Ingle writes in clear and simple sentences, and this would have been much more difficult with a book that used more jargon. I do not recommend reading jargon-heavy books in the humanities; it encourages writing that sort of thing and I don't condone it.

Winnowing down your research

Okay, so I've now read several academic essays, several works by the author I'm studying, and have read four chapters in two books about this guy, as well as dug out old newspaper columns and letters.

Now I sit down and hammer out a thesis, right?

Nope! Now you pare down your research!

My annotated bibliography is now almost nine thousand words long. That is MUCH more material than I'm going to be able to effectively use, so it is time for me to make a new document.

THIS document is going to be getting close to the bibliography/works cited page that I'm going to be using in my final paper, so I'm going to make sure that each citation is

in proper MLA format, and, because I'm going to try to do this correctly, I'm going to go in alphabetical order.

So this:

Blackstock, Alan. "Beyond the pale: women, cultural contagion, and narrative hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and Forster." *ARIEL*, vol. 36, no. 1-2, Jan.-Apr. 2005, pp. 183+.

[Image description: an improper citation with the writer's name highlighted and formatting that doesn't conform to MLA standards.]

Becomes this:

Blackstock, Alan. "Beyond the pale: women, cultural contagion, and narrative hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and Forster." *ARIEL*, vol. 36, no. 1-2, 2005, pp. 183-198.

[Image description: the same citation with its formatting corrected to comply with MLA 9th edition and the highlight removed from the author's name.]

Which isn't a huge change but formatting is a really silly thing to get dinged on, so modern MLA specs it is.

At this point, my annotated bibliography is a mess. It's full of random notes and some of the quotations that I have copy-pasted are a mess. It's fifteen pages, and scrolling back and forth to look for quotes is going to be a nightmare, especially because I've got chunks of text that are hundreds of words long. So what I'm going to do is pull out the highly-quotable segments of the text that I've copied and copy that into my new document, which I'm calling my works cited page.

So this:

Blackstock, Alan. "Beyond the pale: women, cultural contagion, and narrative hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and Forster." *ARIEL*, vol. 36, no. 1-2, Jan.-Apr. 2005, pp. 183-205.

- 193-199 for discussion of Burmese days, some discussion of colonialism in the conclusion as well; very different perspective as a feminist reading rather than postcolonial.
- The East has corrupted him by making him contemptuous of both the Burmese he oversees and the English who oversee him (195)
- "That futile accident," the narrator and readers know, was no accident, but the result of U Po Kyin's carefully orchestrated plot to discredit Flory and thus eliminate his support for Veraswami's membership in the club, leaving the way open for U Po Kyin to enjoy the status of being selected as the first non-English member. But if Flory had not rejected Ma Hla May in hopes of marrying Elizabeth, U Po Kyin would have had no scandal to use against Flory, and his plot against Veraswami would have come to naught. (198) – Similar to the narrator's predicament in *SatE*, he is only miserable trying to enforce empire because of the empire his people created in the first place.
- The narrator's ironic stance here scarcely masks the assessment that Elizabeth's success in becoming memsahib is actually a failure, a betrayal of the enlightened principles to which her Paris years had exposed her. In this sense, Elizabeth too falls victim to British India. (199) – Empire degrades the white people who participate in it, it kills their principles.
- Here the perspective of the narrator seems indistinguishable from that of Orwell himself who has made it quite clear in essays like "Shooting an Elephant" and "A Hanging" that such tragedies are the inevitable result of imperialism. In the essays, however, it is the native inhabitants of Burma who are shown to be the principal victims of an impersonal imperialist system, while in the novel both English and natives are victims. (199)
- It is important to note that in every oppressive system one finds individuals who collaborate not by choice, but by compulsion and who are thus both villains and victims. And are the Englishmen who created these fictional characters, or the implied authors who tell their stories, also complicit in their victimization? Suleri questions the "rhetoric of binarism" that governs critiques of colonialism: For colonial facts are vertiginous; they lack a recognizable cultural plot, they frequently fail to cohere around the ~~pastorally~~ that proclaims static lines of demarcation between imperial power and disempowered culture, between colonizer and colonized. Instead,

they move with a ghostly monnity to suggest how highly unsettling an economy of complicity and guilt is in operation between each actor on the colonial stage. (3)

If then despite the difficulty of reclaiming the "original utterance" of their creators, *Tajago*, Flory, and Fielding can be seen in some sense as projections of Kipling, Orwell, and Forster, and if their stories are to some extent exercises in self-criticism, perhaps to that extent they serve to expiate their authors' evident sense of guilt at being participants, however reluctant, in the system whose evils they so powerfully expose.

Rey Chow has called for "a mode of understanding the native" that replaces "the model of western hegemony in which the colonizer is seen as a primary, active 'gaze' subjugating the native as a passive 'object'" with one in which "it is actually the colonizer who feels himself looked at by the native's gaze. This gaze, which is neither a threat nor a retaliation, makes the colonizer 'conscious' of himself, leading to the need to turn this gaze around and look at himself, henceforth 'reflected' in the native object" (51). Morally discriminating readers who see themselves fitly on the enlightened side of the "static lines of demarcation" Suleri identifies might profit from such a disruption, one that interrogates own complicity and guilt in the economy of colonial literature, as voyeurs and consumers or as full participants in the suffering of all the characters—male, female, native, and English, narrators; and authors—in the unfolding drama (204-205)

Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993. 27-5

Suleri, Sara. *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

[Image description: A screenshot of two pages of a document showing a selection of quotations and notes bullet-pointed and highlighted in some places. The text is more than a page of single-spaced quotations, about 700 words.]

Becomes this:

Blackstock, Alan. "Beyond the pale: women, cultural contagion, and narrative hysteria in Kipling, Orwell, and Forster." *ARIEL*, vol. 36, no. 1-2, 2005, pp. 183-205.

- But if Flory had not rejected Ma Hla May in hopes of marrying Elizabeth, U Po Kyin would have had no scandal to use against Flory, and his plot against Veraswami would have come to naught. (198)
- such tragedies are the inevitable result of imperialism [...] both English and natives are victims. (199)
- Their stories are to some extent exercises in self-criticism, perhaps to that extent they serve to expiate their authors' evident sense of guilt at being participants, however reluctant, in the system whose evils they so powerfully expose. (205)

[Image description: A citation with three bullet-pointed quotes; about 150 words.]

and I end with a document that is five pages long and just over 2500 words and there will be no last-minute panic about whether my works cited page is properly formatted.

Now, finally, I've done a ton of research and found a whole pile of references and read all these articles and BOOKS for this one assignment, now, surely, I sit down and write a paper, right?

You fool.

Now I read the original work one more time and begin transcribing pertinent passages that I will reference in my essay.

Hacking together your paper

As you re-read your source material to pull out quotes, you want to make notes on what you're thinking about the quotes that you're pulling out. Are you pulling out a quote because it opposes a point you saw made in one of the essays you read? Make a note. Is there an exact parallel to another one of the author's stories? Make a note.

Generally at this stage I find myself arguing with people, which is exactly correct because the whole point of a research paper like this is for you to make an argument about a work and defend it. One note I made says "[AUTHOR] contends that this is sincere, I maintain it is sarcasm, evidence from *Burmese Days* and *A Hanging*" which is just a scribbled note in a margin, but is also basically a nascent body paragraph of an essay because it is "external source says X of primary source; I believe external source is incorrect because author's other work mirrors the statement in a non-fiction context and here is some analysis of this." If you can make quick notes like "this chapter in the critical book backs up my assertion here" or "authors X, Y, and Z all discussed this line with different interpretations" do it, because those are the things that you're going to expand into your wordcount.

After you've mined your primary source for quotes and maybe made some scribbles or done a brainstorm on paper, start hammering out slightly clearer ideas in a new document.

The purpose of imperialism per SAE is to extract resources from colonized peoples while also training Britons to hate the colonized. Orwell is extremely didactic in SAE where he is subtle in A Hanging and Marrakech: he wants to be firmly on the side of the Burmese but he hates them, and this hatred has become a "normal state of affairs." [blackstock 195 quote check notes handwritten]

Orwell's point is that the normalization of this kind of hatred is bad. [quotes about empire being supported by the colonized people of the world]

Ranjit contends that Orwell's "business as usual" attitude is sincere, and that it is evidence of his failure as an anti-imperialist. Ranjit links the killing of the elephant to Orwell's flinching from liberation, stating that he has seen the purpose of imperialism but flinched away in self-defense. Malina says the same, that Orwell's work simply reinforces the idea that the failure of the Raj was not in its subjugation, but in the failure to more thoroughly subjugate people.

Orwell's later writings and political writings would seem to put lie to this. While he is undeniably paternalist in his attitude toward the people of India in "TLatU" he attacks England for keeping India artificially backward and makes the point that the comforts of the English working class are only possible because of the labor of people on the other side of the globe. Stewart noted that Orwell amended his earlier works to use more updated and sensitive language "uses his privilege as a writer to shed light on the grievances of the perpetually silenced by focusing on the importance and the impact of everyday practice" (27-28)

[Image description: A screenshot of four paragraphs of a document reading:

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grievances of the perpetually silenced by focusing on the importance and the impact of everyday practice" (27-28)]

We are talking "below shitpost" levels of clarity here. You should write this part in about half an hour to an hour, max. You may know generally what your thoughts are and may be able to defend them to yourself, but nobody is going to be able to understand what the fuck you're talking about. That's fine. Your next step from here is to go look over your citations document, the one with all the Really Good quotes you isolated, and read through them. Then you go back to your half-baked paper and add more arguments or clarify things.

After reading my selected quotations, returning to one of the books that I'm citing, and fucking around online for three hours, the idea of what I want to write about has percolated into something quasi-sensible.

Look at your vague ideas and simplify them into assertions. These are the most basic outline of your paper. I have six assertions that I am making, each of which will have at least two points proving it, which means that I'm probably going to end up with between 8-12 body paragraphs.

Assertion 1: "The real purpose of imperialism" is not only to extract resources from the colonized countries, but also to teach the agents of empire (police, soldiers, merchants, the 'civilizing' force of white people) to hate the colonized peoples.

Assertion 2: Orwell is definitively critical of this; he is critical of it from a moral standpoint and wrote/spoke at other points of his life about his disapproval for empire

Assertion 3: Some critics have said that Orwell's racism is sincere and that his writing was actually to reinforce empire. These people are wrong, as can be seen through works like Orwell's *Lion and the Unicorn* and as quoted in Stewart

Assertion 4: The use of jarring, racist language is intentional; comparisons with later works and his assertion of updating his language for "Burmese Days" to correct group terms while leaving slurs intact suggests he was aware of the power of these epithets; this follows a pattern he set in his writing on Dickens, as commented on by Stewart (Quote).

[Image description: Four short paragraphs reading:

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Once you have your assertions, write the barest bare bones of a conclusion. You aren't writing out the full statement of what your paper is, you are writing the general thought that you are going to aim these assertions at. "IF [assertions 1-6], THEN [conclusion]."

Conclusion: Orwell is not truly unsympathetic to these subjects of empire, the oscillating hanged man or the Indian ground into the mud. He is not describing factual truths, but emotional truths, using the real emotive history of his experience to compel his readers to feel the pathos that he did not at the time. This is not, as Ranajit says "coming down firmly on the side of unfreedom" (492), but is Orwell rearing back from the mask, seeing what his face could grow to fit and calling out a warning where before he could only bite his tongue [specifically include Ranajit's quote about isolation/Ingle's quote about silencing]

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Absolutely, positively, do not write your introduction yet. (You will note, you have not, at any point, written anything that could be considered a "thesis statement" yet, but your conclusion should be getting pretty close)

Your focus at this point is to flesh out the assertions you have made. In this first pass you should gather an embarrassment of evidence, but not pay particular attention to natural transitions or a ton of analysis. For example, assertion two, that "Orwell is definitively critical of this" now looks like this:

Orwell makes this explicit in "Shooting an Elephant," telling the reader that "feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism" and are shared by "any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty" (4). The doubled role of terrorized and terrorizer is inescapable, but also meaningless. Orwell describes the narrator's situation as "hollow," and "futile," making the hated official into a puppet of the crowd as he attempts to enforce "the white man's dominion in the east" (8). Stephen Ingle describes Orwell's use of similar circumstances in *Burmese Days* as "confront[ing the reader] with a state of affairs that is very difficult to defend on any moral grounds" (33), which is typical of Orwell's discourse on empire. Orwell was not only critical of empire in his fiction and narrative essays; from his eulogy on Rudyard Kipling to his newspaper column to his writing on the nature of English socialism, he only ever wrote of imperialism as "an evil thing" ("Shooting an Elephant" 3). Orwell's own experience as a policeman in Burma and an agent of empire that compelled him to share the vicious spirit, if not the precise facts (Ingle, 175) of imperialism with his readers.

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(for the record, I'm aware that these are difficult to read but I do not want to have the potential text of my essay searchable on the internet before I've submitted the paper for a grade. In the final version of this document these images will either be inline text or will be captioned with a transcription)

As I'm going through this process, I'm moving my older notes to the bottom of the page. So I start with my random notes, then I put my assertions above those, then I put my fleshed-out paragraphs above those, and as I finish fleshing out each assertion I move the assertion to the bottom. I'm keeping all three of these things on one document and shifting them around so that I keep seeing them, and seeing the phrases that I've written.

There's this thing in art where sometimes the quick lines of a sketch look better and more representative of an action than a finished drawing does. You're saving your messy notes and your assertions for the same reason; as you go through and polish

your essay you may find yourself drifting from the clear line of thought you had when you started, which is when you should go back to your other notes and see if there's a way you can recapture the feeling of the quick sketch.

Orwell makes this explicit in "Shooting an Elephant," telling the reader that "feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism" and are shared by "any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty" (4). The doubled role of terrorized and terrorizer is inescapable, but also meaningless. The narrator has nothing to gain from a perfect performance other than escaping the laughter of people he hates. Orwell describes the narrator's situation as "hollow," and "futile," making the hated official into a puppet of the crowd as he attempts to enforce "the white man's dominion in the east" (8). The police officer is playacting the role of a soldier, the Burmese people are self-defensively deferential (unless they are justifiably cruel), and nobody involved in the arrangement benefits it. Stephen Ingle describes Orwell's use of similar circumstances in *Burmese Days* as "confront[ing the reader] with a state of affairs that is very difficult to defend on any moral grounds" (33), which is typical of Orwell's discourse on empire. Orwell was not only critical of empire in his fiction and narrative essays; from his eulogy on Rudyard Kipling to his newspaper column to his writing on the nature of English socialism, he only ever wrote of imperialism as "an evil thing" ("Shooting an Elephant" 3). While there is a clear element of performance to this story and the events in question are dubiously true, there is little doubt as to Orwell's sincerity in presenting the reader with this view of imperialism. It was Orwell's own experience as a policeman in Burma and an agent of empire that compelled him to share the vicious spirit, if not the precise facts (Ingle, 175) of imperialism with his readers for as long as he continued writing.

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welcome to academia, we have long paragraphs and everyone hates it (291 words), jeeze.

You should now have written out your main body paragraphs with all of the citations you plan on using.

When you are done with that, look at all of the support paragraphs you've got and make the blandest possible statement about all of them. Mine is basically "Orwell opposed empire and used his narrator's over-the-top loathing of humans in contrast to his overdeveloped sympathy for the elephant to illustrate the cruelty and brutality of imperialism in a way that his middle-class British audience would internalize. This is a performance for the characters in the story as well as for Orwell and the reader."

You now have a basic thesis to aim at while you go and bulk up your arguments in your support paragraphs. My target thesis is "SAE is about performative cruelty to show how brutal and futile empire is to his audience."

What you do at this point is you go through and you add clarity. I know that adding a bunch of words to a long paragraph doesn't make it *look* any clearer, but here's the deal: you have been making these arguments to yourself in your head the whole time you have been researching and writing this paper. Your reader does NOT have the same reference points that you do, so these additional little bits of commentary are you getting the reader on the same page as you.

Once you have done that to every support paragraph, go back to your conclusion and tweak the conclusion so that it aligns with what you've said in your support paragraphs.

NOW write your introduction and "thesis statement." (once you get to a certain level of this kind of writing you don't really write "thesis statements" as such, you just kind of outline your argument).

Mine got real weird.

I have apparently arrived at the conclusion that the specific racism in "Shooting an elephant" is an intentional technique used by the author in combination with performativity and symbolic animals to get his middle class white liberal audience to actually care about destroying empire. (don't worry, I do still make the point that he was probably pretty racist).

So now that I have my [weird ass] thesis, I read back through the essay, and make sure my arguments in each supporting paragraph and in the conclusion support the argument that I make in the introduction.

Now add any notes that you have in whatever formatting is appropriate for your paper, then copy over your works cited to get everything in one document then, and this is

crucial, make a copy of your document to turn in to your professor. Do not turn in the document you've been writing in; Word and Gdocs often have version histories embedded in the document that can fuck you over if there's something weird that you wrote on your document.

Editing in an ideal world

In a world where I'm not a terrible procrastinator, I would take the time to read the essay aloud two or three times over the course of a week to take further opportunities to make my arguments clearer, catch typos, and make sure that I'm not totally talking out of my ass. Unfortunately, this is not an ideal world and I am a terrible procrastinator, so now that it's the day after I've turned in my essay I have realized that I missed a word in the paragraph above and have read an Orwell piece about politics and language that I wish I'd read and included in my argument (I didn't even go looking for it; it popped up on my tumblr feed and I'm furious, it would have been VERY helpful for what I was doing.)

Reading your homework aloud – really, actually reading it aloud – is a great way to realize where you've fucked up. Your eyes don't even see the typos that are still there because you've been staring at the document for too long. This is also why spending a day or two away from the paper is a good idea. If you can't spend a day or two away from the paper, try changing the font and the color of the text to defamiliarize it.

If your school has a tutoring or writing center and you aren't right up against the deadline, take your paper to the writing center or speak to a tutor and see if they can go through the document with you to at least manage typing errors and check for clarity on a sentence-level. For the record: this is why it's also a good idea to find a study buddy in each of your classes, even the ones you don't actually intend to study for. If you can get someone who is in your class at the same level as you are and who has the same professor and has seen how they grade to look over your paper, that's a great way to get a better polish on the document than you will if it's just you staring at the paper in the middle of the night going "this is done, right?"

Anyway, I always feel like an abject failure the moment I hit "submit," but I have yet to actually fail any paper that I've turned in, so that's the best defense I can give for this method of writing papers.

Good luck, and don't panic!